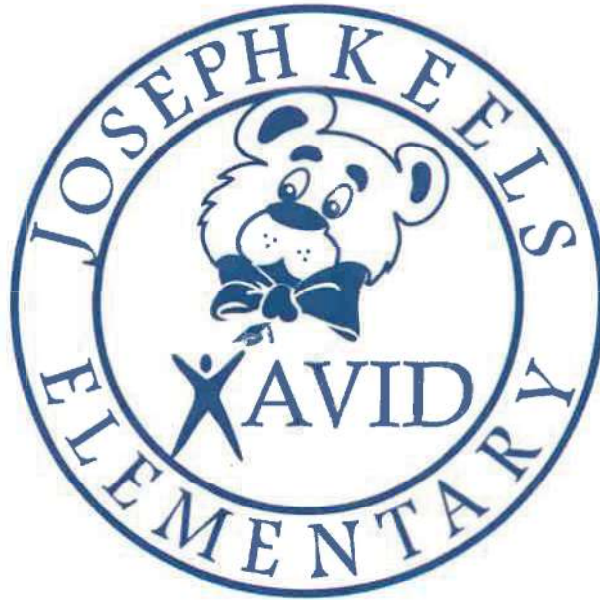


Joseph Keels Elementary School

7500 Springcrest Drive • Columbia, SC 29223



Alvera C. Butler, Principal
(803) 736-8754 ext. 75003
abutler@richland2.org

Malcolm Pressley
2021-2022
SIC Chairperson
3135 Windwood Place
Columbia, SC 29204
mpress321@gmail.com
(803)-665-7636

Richland School District Two

Case Statement for Joseph Keels Elementary School

IC Summary

Joseph Keels Elementary (JKE) is a school with a 62 year tradition of excellence, and our SIC has contributed in a variety of ways to that tradition. We are fortunate to have an SIC that brings diversity of thought and skill to the table and who are engaged in the work of improving our school.

JKE, located in Richland School District Two, Columbia, South Carolina, has an enrollment of 430 and serves students in grades Pre-Kindergarten through 5th Grade. The demographic breakdown of the student population for the 2020-21 school year was approximately 448 students. That same year 85% of our students were African-American, 9% Hispanic, 0.8% Caucasian, 3.5% Other, and 2% Asian.

In 2020, the SIC determined that based on information from the state report card and school climate surveys, our focus areas would be: 1) increasing parental engagement and communication, 2) closing opportunity gaps by increasing student exposure and access to college and career readiness, and 3) working to find ways to improve student learning.

Focus Area: Increasing Parent Engagement and Communication

At Joseph Keels Elementary, we strive to build a bridge between home and school. The SIC believes that the current and future success of the student depends on how well the school communicates with the home. When parents are invested in their student's learning, growth can be seen in many different ways. As the Burmese proverb states, "Parents are the first teacher of the children."

The pandemic caused the 2019-2020 school year to change abruptly and the way academic content was being taught to students was different in the blink of an eye. During the 2020-2021 school year, students had to learn to be virtual learners, then many transitioned into being in-person learners, and participated in a dual-modality setting. Social Emotional Learning (SEL) became one of the main focuses of our school to help students and families be able to focus on education while also dealing with the stressors of the pandemic. In addition, the SIC used the data from the School Report Card and School Climate Survey and determined there was a need for attention as it relates to parent engagement and communication. After reviewing the data, the SIC determined that the school needed to focus on building a consistent relationship between home and school.

To improve parent engagement and communication the SIC suggested JKE focus on finding creative ways to get parents involved in activities at school. Prior to the pandemic, the SIC hosted Parent University: Report Card Pick Up Nights to increase the partnership between school and home. Report Card Pick Up Nights allowed parents to come to the school and have an opportunity to view their student's report cards and ask questions, if needed. Meals were provided to support parents and encourage participation. Report Card Pick Up Nights helped build positive rapport between home and school. With the onset of COVID-19, the SIC encouraged JKE to continue to have Parent Universities in a virtual format. Transitioning to a virtual format was safe during the pandemic and made it possible for all to participate by attending the live session or watching the follow up recording of the session. The focus of the 2020-2021 Parent Universities were self-care and academics. One Parent University was led by the Learning Support Team (LSS) which includes the School Counselor, School Psychologist, and School Social Worker. During this event, the LSS team focused on self-care for both students and parents. The event received great feedback and support from families and the community. Parents stated that they felt supported and enjoyed learning ways to take care of their children and themselves mentally. In addition, the SIC hosted a Parent University in the format of a Virtual Health and Wellness Carnival, which included resources to educate parents about COVID-19; managing stress, isolation and grief; health benefits of physical activity; fun outdoor activities during periods of social distancing; nutrition, and tips for virtual learners. A centerpiece of the Virtual Health and Wellness Carnival was a live virtual workout for JKE families. This engaging experience, designed to provide a physical

workout and reduce stress and anxiety, allowed the JKE community to bond while having fun and working out together. The SIC's intentional focus on activities to increase parent engagement was successful, based on the increasing number of participants at SIC sponsored events.

Some members of the SIC are parents of students in multiple grade-levels. Parental feedback revealed that inconsistency in communication methods make it difficult for parents to keep up with all of the great happenings at JKE. After discussion and soliciting feedback from other JKE stakeholders, the SIC strongly encouraged the school to find a consistent way for the teachers to get information out to parents. The school used this suggestion to purchase a license for all teachers to use the Smore Newsletter platform. Smore is now consistently used across the board for principal messages, the weekly school newsletters and teacher weekly newsletters. Smore allows a consistent platform to keep parents aware of the weekly academic focus and happenings in their child's classroom as well as in the school. All Smore newsletters are shared on Fridays for consistency. Based on analytics provided by the Smore platform, a 100% increase of parent and school engagement has been seen over time. Sending weekly information to parents allows for open communication between both parties.

As the US Department of Education states, "Family engagement refers to the systematic inclusion of families in activities and programs that promote children's development, learning, and wellness, including in the planning, development, and evaluation of such activities, programs, and systems." We strive to use this definition as a platform to help support our leaders of tomorrow.

Focus Area: College and Career Readiness

JKE Vision Statement: "At Joseph Keels Elementary, we have high expectations for organization and preparation, and a mindset without limitations." Our JKE vision statement has roots stemming from the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) framework and communicates our vision to provide students with adequate strategies and skills to become global citizens, meeting and surpassing college and career readiness opportunities. When reflecting on the state report card, and observable needs of the school, the SIC suggested that one focus for 2020-2021 should be college and career readiness. The SIC encouraged JKE to increase student exposure to colleges and universities around the globe, enhancing student awareness of language, culture, and diversity. As a result, JKE established Virtual College Tours. Virtual College Tours introduced a diverse group of colleges and universities to students on a weekly basis. Played on the JKE Morning News Show, the college tours consist of highlighting programs of study that a college or university is known for, academic buildings and residential halls, overall campus life with an emphasis on the impact of AVID strategies in college. In addition to enhancing student exposure to colleges and universities, a reflection piece was added encouraging students to use Costa's Level of thinking in order to give voice to their opinions as well as furthering connections with the schools highlighted in the tours. Virtual College Tours are available on the JKE Morning News Show, Parent Newsletters, and the JKE website bridging the gap between home and school communication, and also provide parents with common language at home.

Our SIC goal for 2020-2021, to increase college and university exposure, was based on the knowledge that students in the JKE demographic have had a limited scope of opportunities to gain knowledge about higher education. Our data suggest that since incorporating this into JKE's weekly routine, students have not only been exposed to schools all over the country, but have found excitement and a vision for the future. Students are beginning to change their perspectives of what their future can look like regarding higher education and can see the value of education as it pertains to their future. Our goal is to encourage students to stay on a positive education path with an emphasis on organizational strategies. Students are now learning with greater emphasis on keeping the end in mind.

Focus Area: Academic Growth and Achievement

Academic growth and achievement can be measured in a number of ways. At Joseph Keels Elementary (JKE) we examine all of the available data to reflect on how we can better serve our students both individually and as a whole. Upon reflecting on our 2018-2019 state test scores, the SIC suggested finding ways to improve our fourth grade science instruction in the 2020-2021 school year that would have immediate and future impact. At the time, classroom teachers were solely responsible for teaching science, and while they are still the primary science teachers, we added an extra science class called "Science Unlimited". We utilized our dedicated science lab teacher, funded by Title 1, to co-teach with the classroom teachers to facilitate an extra science class weekly for each fourth grade class. During these classes, students focus on hands-on science experiences aligned to the current in-class curriculum. Many times students take trips outside on the JKE campus to witness and document science in nature. For instance, students may collect data on local weather patterns and compare them to other parts of the country or world. Building models of the solar system encourages our fourth grade students to further their understanding and exploration of the subject matter. Students may gather data on a variety of different plants then determine if they are flowering or non-flowering. Measuring shadows and tracking the sun at different times of day helps our students to understand the motion of the Earth as it orbits the Sun. These are just a few examples of the types of hands-on experiences our students are participating in on a daily basis.


Our 2020-2021 SCPASS science scores are evidence that this has had a positive effect on the academic growth and achievement of our students in science. Science scores from 2018-2019 show 25.8% of students at JKE met or exceeded expectations, of which 2.2% exceeded expectations. The following year, we were met with COVID-19 and did not test therefore our data shows a one year gap. At the end of the 2020-2021 school year, our scores increased to 29.7% meeting or exceeding expectations with 12.5% of students exceeding expectations. This a significant improvement especially considering the unique challenges presented by COVID- 19. JKE also narrowed the JKE/Richland Two achievement gap in science. In 2018-2019 the gap was 19.8 points but in 2020-2021 the gap decreased to 10.3 points. This shows evidence of significant growth of JKE students in science. This improvement for JKE is a direct result of our SIC goals and support to make improvements in student achievement in science.

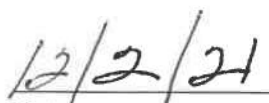
School Year	Met or Exceeded Expectations	Exceeded Expectations
2019	25.8%	2.2%
2021	29.7%	12.5%
*Gap in Science Scores between Richland Two and JKE narrowed from 19.8% (2019) to 10.3% (2021)		

Conclusion

The SIC is an integral part of JKE. We work to ensure the needs of all of our students, parents, and families are met. The SIC's leadership and influence is vital in the collaborative process that allows input from staff, families, and community members to set goals for the improvement of JKE. We are proud that JKE does and will benefit from our valuable relationship now and in the future.

Respectfully Submitted By:


Malcolm Pressley, 2021-2022 SIC Chairperson


Date

December 2, 2021

Principal Alvera C. Butler
100 Springcrest Dr.
Columbia, South Carolina 29223

Dear SC-SIC Awards Committee:

I have worked closely with the School Improvement Council throughout my eleven years as principal at Joseph Keels Elementary. I am especially proud of our work which has been in partnership and encouraged by our SIC. During the 2020-2021 school year, we experienced increased parent involvement, increased connections to college and career readiness, and increased academic achievement. I am proud that our SIC works collaboratively with our school to identify areas of focus for improvement and works throughout the school year to see that those focus areas are supported with action steps and ultimately that we experience positive outcomes. I am impressed by the level of passion that the SIC team has with regard to ensuring our students succeed.


As an SIC we have used a variety of data over the years to determine areas in which we can improve. During the 2020-2021 school year, we focused on Increasing Parent Involvement & Communications, College and Career Readiness and Academic Growth and Achievement. As a result of our SIC's focus in these areas we made significant gains in each of these areas.

The effects of COVID-19 on the emotional well being of our families was a major concern and there were many uncertain times during the school year. One of our most successful SIC sponsored events during the 2020-2021 school year was our Virtual Health and Wellness Carnival. In order to increase parent involvement and provide emotional support the SIC planned a Virtual Health and Wellness Carnival which included a live workout for families with a community partner, and other resources such as: COVID-19 information and services, ideas for supporting students during virtual learning, grief support and ideas surrounding healthy nutrition. We had over 200 participants! As a result, many parents who had not met teachers, faculty or staff were able to connect. This event bolstered our school/home partnerships which are essential to support student success.

The SIC also collaborated with us in setting a goal to improve student achievement. An area the SIC and admin agreed we could have an impact on was our school's science scores. As a result of reviewing our science scores we decided to put in place a program that we originated called "Science Unlimited." An outcome of which I am most proud is the way we were able to restructure how our 4th grade students would receive Science instruction. We were able to offer "push-in" support to students. Our Science Lab teacher, who also served as a teacher member of our SIC, worked diligently to provide more hands-on and inquiry based learning to ensure the success of the science initiative. JKE students increased science achievement by nearly 5% and the students exceeding expectations by more than 10%. We are so elated that we were able to see the results of goal setting from the SIC and continuous collaboration throughout the implementation process.

JKE is on a path to success in communication and connecting with families, college and career readiness, and student achievement that we are certainly proud of. Our SIC is responsible for not only setting goals collaboratively, but also partnering and supporting in the many steps along the way. We are grateful for the many successes our students, teachers, families and community are experiencing and our SIC is most deserving of the Dick and Tunky Riley Award recognition for their unwavering efforts for the improvement of Joseph Keels Elementary.

In Excellence,


Alvera C. Butler
Principal

December 1, 2021

Dear SC- SIC Awards Committee:

The AVID College Tours help me figure out where I want to go to get my future education in life. They help me decide where the right college is for me to learn stuff I'm interested in. I can learn and understand stuff that will help me in my future career and my future job. The AVID College Tours make me think about what I want to do in the future and what college provides above and beyond what I need to get my future degree. The AVID College Tours are very helpful and nice to watch because they are funny, but informing you about your future college. They make me think about the future college that I might want to attend. They help me think about my future and make sure I make the right decision on where to go to college. The tours help me make brighter decisions on colleges that will help me with my future career and make me smarter on that specific objective that I want to accomplish in my life. For instance, I want to go to a college that helps people who want to be a surgeon in the future. The AVID college tours provide me with what I need to accomplish to be successful in the future. The tours help you try to make good decisions in college that can make you smarter, stronger and have a bigger vocabulary in the job you want to succeed in so that you will not fail for not having the skills you need for that specific job that you want. The AVID college tours are very helpful and I think you should pay attention to them so you can make the best decision for your future.

Sincerely,

Phenominel B Brown

Phenominel Brown

5th Grade Student

Joseph Keels Elementary School

December 2, 2021

Joe Seibles

160 Landis Road
Winnsboro, SC 29180

Dear SC-SIC Awards Committee,

Joseph Keels Elementary School (JKE) has a very special place in my heart. I have been partnering with JKE in a variety of ways for several years now. I was initially drawn to JKE through a partnership with my fraternity, Kappa Alpha Psi, Inc. I am honored to participate in two mentoring programs at JKE. I serve as a mentor in the Lunch Buddies Mentoring program. The Lunch Buddies mentoring program is designed to build relationships between college educated men of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. and 4th grade male students at JKE. In addition, I serve as a mentor in the Table Talkers Mentoring program, which is a mentoring program designed to build relationships between volunteer community members and 5th grade students.

Once I became a part of the JKE school community I noticed immediately that they have a wonderful school culture that fosters collaboration. As a former elementary school principal, it was apparent to me that JKE works hard to meet the needs of the whole child. There are a variety of academic, extracurricular and mentoring programs available to students. JKE works to connect parents and students with the general community through partnerships with Elite Soccer, the Richland County Public Library, USC Strings Consortium, Kappa Alpha Psi, Inc., and local churches to name a few. As an educator, I understand the importance of the saying, "It takes a village to raise a child". I am proud to be a part of the JKE village.

The SIC has a strong presence at JKE and encouraged and promoted college and career readiness as a focus area during the 2020-2021 school year. I was especially proud that with the presence of COVID-19, this focus was not diminished. The SIC influenced all partners to continue our goals in a virtual environment. As a result, many mentoring groups, such as Lunch Buddies continued, but in a virtual format.

One area I am most impressed with is the focus on virtual college tours to expose students to colleges and universities and to encourage students to consider college as an attainable future goal. It has been my experience that attending college allows students to meet their highest potential. Many of my mentees make connections to the virtual college tours they view weekly. I can see the spark in their eyes when they talk about which college they wish to attend and which programs they wanted to pursue while in college. Of course, I encourage them to consider joining a prestigious fraternity such as Kappa Alpha Psi, Inc. as well. As a graduate of Allen University, an HBCU, I really appreciate the inclusion of HBCUs in the virtual college tours. Including HBCUs really helps students make culturally relevant connections that further encourage JKE students to attend college. I am elated with the idea of encouraging students to attend college. With well planned virtual college tours and culturally relevant connections I could clearly see that students were finding more meaning in school and working harder to prepare themselves.

Bravo to Joseph Keels and its SIC on its many successes and achievements and many more to come!

Very Proud JKE Partner,



Joe E. Seibles

The purpose of the Joseph Keels Elementary School Improvement Council (SIC) is to analyze data and trends to inform goals and actions that will support our school in its quest for continuous improvement. As an SIC, we have been successful in facilitating meaningful collaboration between all stakeholders while working toward addressing our three goals: (1) build a positive, safe, respectful, and nurturing environment in which our students will learn and live, (2) implement a variety of instructional and academic initiatives that support teachers and students in becoming an increasingly rigorous and high-achieving school, and (3) develop an environment that fosters professional learning communities. Our SIC established three focus areas aligned to our goals, which guided our actions and work during the 2020-2021 school year.

In alignment with Goal 1, our SIC focused on **Increasing Parent Engagement and Communication**. Given the hardships that the pandemic presented and the effects on social and emotional well-being, as an SIC we thought a great way to engage and communicate with parents would be to host a Health and Wellness Carnival. However, we knew that our carnival would not be structured in the same way as a traditional carnival. Therefore, we determined that the Health and Wellness Carnival would be held virtually. Families, faculty and staff were provided a Zoom link to participate in the carnival. The topics presented included: motivating e-learners, nutrition, Get Fit, resources related to COVID-19, connecting with nature, dealing with grief and loss, and fun-filled family activities. All the activities listed were an outgrowth of our SIC's desire to provide support during the "unchartered waters" of COVID-19. The Health and Wellness Carnival received a high turnout of students, faculty, staff, parents and extended families. The SIC concludes that holding a virtual carnival that promotes positive information is a great way to support families in unprecedented times, and will implement another event during the 2021-22 school year that mirrors the support for social and emotional well-being as well as engagement and communication. .

In alignment with Goal 2, our SIC focused on **College and Career Readiness** specifically by encouraging Virtual College Tours for all students. Our Virtual College Tours provide students with exposure to colleges and universities, enhance student vocabulary, and support our school wide focus on AVID (Achieving Via Individual Determination) and College and Career Readiness. Prior to COVID-19, students were able to tour college campuses in person; however, due to limitations that COVID-19 brought, this was not possible. Our SIC suggested a shift to a virtual platform for the tours. While students no longer were able to visit in person, the virtual option enables all students to participate in this opportunity yielding a more equitable experience. Through production creativity and age-appropriate follow up activities, students were highly engaged. We are elated that our students are empowered by the connections they make with the virtual college tours. After reflecting on the success of our Virtual College Tours, we encouraged continued use of this strategy and suggested expanding its use in our instructional practices. Our recommendations for next steps include allowing students to select the colleges and universities being highlighted, assisting students with researching the selected school, and having students participate in and learn from the production of the Virtual College Tour videos.

In alignment with Goal 3, our SIC focused on **Academic Growth and Achievement**. After reviewing science data, our SIC suggested finding novel ways to improve science instruction. Science is best learned in person with a hands-on approach; however, COVID-19 decreased the ability to reach students on this level, which impacted student achievement. As a result of our recommendation, a professional learning community (PLC) was formed between fourth-grade teachers and the science lab teacher to identify learning gaps and to develop solutions to increase achievement in those areas. "Science Unlimited" was created as an outgrowth of the PLC as an additional instructional block, where the science lab teacher worked as a co-teacher with the fourth-grade classroom teachers. This PLC met often with the district science specialist to review formative data and create engaging lessons, including many outdoor activities where students could remain socially distanced while participating in hands-on learning. This work proved to be a success. Our 4th-grade SCPASS data showed major improvements, as we increased from 25.8% to 29.7% meeting or exceeding expectations. In addition, we increased from 2.2% to 12.5% of students *exceeding* expectations despite COVID-19 limitations. Science Unlimited has continued to grow and expand as COVID-19 restrictions are lifted. As an SIC, we have recommended continued use of this successful model to provide a focus on additional subjects, such as mathematics.

As an SIC we are elated that we were able to focus on increasing parent engagement and communication, college and career readiness, as well as academic growth and achievement in order to make progress in reaching our goals. We look forward to our continued work in improving and supporting Joseph Keels Elementary in future success.